

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
The Honorable James N. McLaughlin, First Vice-Chair
The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Second Vice-Chair
Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee

RE: Rhode Island H5210 – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Casey, Vice-Chair McLaughlin, Vice-Chair Donovan, and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of all of the people we serve in Rhode Island, we respectfully request your support for [House Bill 5210](#), which requires insurers issuing Medicare supplement policies, typically known as Medigap, in the state to offer these policies to all patients who are eligible for Medicare by reason of disability, including end-stage renal disease (ESRD) regardless of age.

As you may already know, most people with ESRD become eligible for Medicare regardless of age, and most of them choose to enroll in the program as their primary health insurance coverage. However, for many of these patients, private supplemental Medigap insurance is needed to afford their deductibles and co-pays, as Medicare Part B covers 80 percent of medical care with no cap on out-of-pocket (OOP) expenses. ESRD patients have complex health care needs and face high out-of-pocket costs: average annual OOP costs for ESRD patients on Medicare are \$10,000.

Unfortunately, not all Medicare beneficiaries have access to supplemental coverage because in 20 states, including Rhode Island, insurers are not required to offer Medigap to ESRD patients under the age of 65. Nearly 50 percent of dialysis patients in Rhode Island are under 65.^[1] Further, without a Medicare Supplement plan many patients are ineligible for a transplant because they are considered “under-insured.” Since a kidney transplant is the best treatment for those with ESRD, it is not an understatement to say that this legislation could be a lifesaver.

Expanding Medigap coverage to people in Rhode Island with ESRD under the age of 65 will not only save lives but will also make it easier for patients to cope with the serious financial challenges that patients often experience after being diagnosed with a chronic disease.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this important legislation. For all these reasons we respectfully ask for your support for House Bill 5210.

Sincerely,

Melanie Lynn Lendnal

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^[1] U.S. Renal Data System RenDER

American Kidney Fund
Director, State Policy and Advocacy